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Impact of Soviet Naval Presence in Third World Countries

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A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [redacted] Theater Forces Division, Office of Soviet Analysis. Contributions were also made by [redacted]

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This paper was coordinated with the National Intelligence Council. [redacted]

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Key Judgments

Information available as of 1 July 1982 was used in this report.

Naval calls and contacts are often among the first tools used to demonstrate Soviet interest in a country and frequently continue to be among the most visible. Nonetheless, the Navy is but one—often a minor one—of a number of political, military, commercial, and other instruments that Moscow uses in building its relationship with a Third World state. In some cases, it is difficult to isolate the naval relationship from an extensive military training and aid program or from a variety of other state-to-state ties. In others, the wariness of the Third World state has kept Soviet naval ties to a minimum and they are identifiable only as a potential tool.

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Despite serious setbacks—such as their expulsion from naval facilities in Somalia and Egypt—the Soviets have had some success in transforming their naval presence abroad into influence with Third World host states. Many of the factors that determine whether naval presence is effective in securing improved access or political concessions are beyond Moscow's control. The Soviets, however, remain committed to building naval ties throughout the Third World. They seem to view the establishment of naval influence as a long-term process of grasping opportunities and to accept the uncertainties of naval presence as a tool of foreign policy.

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Throughout the past decade, as their overseas naval operations have expanded, the Soviets have consistently probed for new or improved access to regional naval facilities. Currently a small number of Third World ports provide significant support to Soviet ships. Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft deploy regularly to five nations—two of which are Communist states—outside the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets' concern about appearing neocolonialist and their suspicions about the durability of foreign basing agreements restrict the intensity of their search for naval access. Nonetheless, they are willing to nurture marginal naval relationships in the hope that the political or military situation will shift to their advantage and result in concrete naval privileges.

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In seeking access to facilities in the Third World, the Soviets hope both to secure support for the operations of their naval ships and aircraft and to improve their image and influence with local governments. Because of the way in which the Soviet Navy operates its ships in distant areas, however, access to foreign port facilities represents an important convenience, rather than a necessity that drives Soviet policy. Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft, on the other hand, require access to airfields in the Third World if they are to operate in regions distant from the USSR.

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Soviet experiences in building naval presence in the Third World condition Moscow's current attitudes. A survey of Soviet tactics and host government responses permits some generalizations about Soviet efforts to grasp comparable opportunities in the future. Soviet naval ties with each Third World state are unique in some respects. Nonetheless, a number of common threads emerge that define how the Soviets establish and use naval presence and highlight those elements of the Soviet–host state relationship that condition the success of Soviet naval policy:

- The Soviets take the long view with respect to the use of naval facilities. They do not press so hard for access that they endanger broader political objectives and generally relent if their requests for access appear to threaten their relationship with the host government.

- The most important single determinant of the nature, extent, and effect of Soviet naval presence is the overall political orientation of the Third World country. Where the ground has been prepared by internal and regional developments that create or reinforce a perception of need for Soviet military, technical, and economic assistance, the Navy can be successfully used as a foreign policy tool.

- A large and active Soviet naval presence can limit the options available to the host state by highlighting its ties to Moscow, which may undercut its relations with more moderate neighboring states. Both Moscow and the host government retain some flexibility, however, and their naval ties are unlikely to cause either to alter the fundamental thrust of their regional policies.

- The Soviets try to use offers of naval equipment and technical services to reinforce their presence and to create a self-perpetuating dependence. Such dependence may result directly in naval concessions. Reliance on Soviet naval aid often outlives the initial gratitude for such assistance, however, as was the case in Guinea.

- The Soviets have been able to use their Navy in regime support activities that capitalize on the insecurity or paranoia that so often typifies Third World regimes.

- A major limit on the long-term potential for extensive foreign naval involvement is the extreme sensitivity of Third World countries concerning their nonaligned status and image.

- Soviet naval presence tends to be low key by Western standards: facilities are generally small, austere, and easily moved in an emergency; and contact between Soviet naval personnel and local populations is restricted.

- Most Third World countries are concerned about the security threat posed by a Soviet presence.

- For most Third World governments the economic benefits of a Soviet naval presence do not appear to be large enough to influence decisively their policies.

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Moscow's low-key approach to the acquisition and use of foreign facilities could change in coming years. If the pace of Soviet naval activity in distant areas increases to the extent that the burden on the afloat logistic system is excessive, the Soviets probably would be more insistent in their requests for naval access. Where an individual country develops new vulnerabilities, Moscow might apply more pressure for access than in the past. Barring such changes, however, the Soviets are likely to continue to view the search for overseas facilities as a long-term process of cautious probing.

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Introduction

As the Soviet Navy has expanded its area of operations, Western nations have been increasingly concerned about Soviet efforts to use naval forces to build influence in the Third World and have focused on Soviet access in Third World states as a measure of Soviet success. This paper examines the interaction between Soviet naval presence and the policies and orientation of local governments. It looks at Soviet goals and the elements that constitute naval presence, discusses the requirements for naval access that result from the Soviet Navy's operating philosophy, and makes general observations about Moscow's use of naval forces in the Third World.

Scope and Method of Analysis

The Soviet Navy attempts to influence an individual state through ship visits, the setting up of shore establishments, and military assistance. Soviet naval presence may also affect the state indirectly even when its ships and personnel are not physically within the boundaries of the state. General perceptions of Soviet naval strength vis-a-vis Western or regional navies can have a real impact on the policies of small states. This paper deals with the first aspect of Soviet naval presence—Moscow's efforts to use the Navy directly to improve its position in Third World countries, to influence events in the local country, or to obtain access to local facilities that will support its naval activities.

There are many Third World states with which the USSR has attempted to establish a naval relationship. We have looked at the history of Soviet naval relations with these states as the basis for our overall judgments. Even the Soviet naval relationships with Cuba and Vietnam—which we do not include as Third World states because their Communist governments are so closely aligned with the USSR as to be part of the Soviet "Bloc"—exhibit many of the commonalities discussed in the overview. When citing specific Soviet experiences as examples of our general conclusions, we have tried to limit our references to historical situations whose basic facts are widely known, such as the Soviet expulsion from Egypt or Somalia, or to current developments.

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We have tried to restrict our judgments to naval matters. Naval calls and contacts are often among the first tools used to demonstrate Soviet interest in a country and often continue to be among the most visible. Nevertheless, the Navy is but one—often a minor one—of a number of political, military, commercial, and other instruments that Moscow uses in building its relationship with a Third World state. In the case of South Yemen, for example, it is difficult to isolate the naval relationship from an extensive military training and aid program and from a host of other state-to-state ties.

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Our analysis focuses on the activities and impact of Soviet naval ships and those merchant ships that provide support to naval forces. Data on ship-days and port visits reflect the activity of naval combatants, auxiliaries, and hydrographic research and space support ships subordinate to the Navy but not those attached to Soviet civilian scientific agencies. We also address the activities of Soviet naval personnel, both those aboard the ships and those who make up shore establishments.

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Our observations refer to some issues that are relevant to the overall Soviet maritime presence in a country but are not purely naval. Local attitudes toward the Soviet Navy are often colored by experiences or perceptions that involve the USSR's civilian ships or Moscow's constant search for access for its merchant or fishing fleets. Local resentment of these efforts or the belief that all Soviet ships are "spy ships" often spills over and becomes part of the local reaction to Soviet naval presence.

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Note on Sources

Information concerning the routine operations of Soviet ships was drawn primarily from data compiled by the US Navy.

Parts of the relationship between the USSR and a Third World government are a matter of public record. Where we have found reason to go beyond the public record—to describe stresses in the relationship or local reactions to Soviet personnel—we have used information from US officials on the scene

Background

Naval Presence Defined

Goals of Naval Presence. The Soviets continue to devote resources to establishing a naval presence in many Third World states despite their uneven record in using naval presence to influence Third World governments and the comparatively small number of states that provide logistic services to the Navy. On balance, they appear more interested in the long-term goal of building political influence than in the naval facilities themselves—partially because of their limited operational dependence on shore-based support as discussed below. Such an approach accords well with the opportunism of their overall policy in the Third World. Moreover, Moscow's continued commitment to maintaining its naval presence in the Third World suggests that the Soviets are realistic about the pitfalls of using naval influence in an unstable environment and have not been disillusioned by the setbacks they have suffered.

The objectives of naval presence fall into three areas:

- In the broadest terms—and beyond the scope of this paper—Moscow seeks to use the Navy to enhance its prestige and contribute to its image as a superpower with a right to a voice in regional or international security questions. Such prestige provides a "reservoir of credibility" that can make the application of force unnecessary in some circumstances or can foreclose on an opponent's ability to respond with force. The role of this objective in Soviet thinking was evident in the expansion of the Indian Ocean Squadron during 1980 or the reinforcement of the Mediterranean Squadron during the crisis in Lebanon. In addition, Moscow hopes that its Navy will undercut the political impact of the presence of Western naval forces and that individual states can be encouraged to deny access to Western ships and aircraft.

- On a practical level, the Soviets seek access to naval facilities that will support the routine deployment of ships and aircraft to the region. Although Soviet requirements for such support are minimal (see below), in peacetime access to local facilities can ease the logistics burden of overseas deployments. Soviet use of Alexandria during the early 1970s, for example, contributed to Moscow's ability to sustain the Mediterranean Squadron, particularly the submarines that would otherwise have had to return to the Northern Fleet for upkeep periods. Following their expulsion from Alexandria, the Soviets reduced their force level in the region and gradually increased the proportion of fleet support ships serving with the squadron.[1]

- An additional operational benefit of overseas facilities is the increased availability of naval forces for contingency responses. Ships deployed to the Mediterranean and serviced there can more rapidly reinforce the token patrol off West Africa, for example, than can ships required to transit from the Northern Fleet. The same applies to ships transiting to the southwest Indian Ocean islands from the Arabian Sea rather than from distant Pacific Fleet bases.

- In individual states, the Soviets hope that their naval presence will contribute to a close and congenial relationship with the local government that will permit Moscow to influence its foreign policy in

[1] Current Soviet access for submarine upkeep in Syria partially replaced the facilities in Egypt, but the Mediterranean Squadron remains at a lower level than in the early 1970s. We believe that the current level represents what the Soviets consider the optimum force required for peacetime use.

directions favorable to the USSR or to affect internal developments. In the case of an unstable regime, Moscow may hope to shore up an individual leader—with little commitment or resources—and secure his gratitude. In other cases, they may hope that the presence of even a small Soviet force will impress the local government with Soviet capabilities to protect or harm. In addition, the Soviet Navy is probably expected to build professional ties with the local military, developing a lobby within the host government and nurturing loyalty in officers who might be helpful in the future. Finally, Soviet open literature emphasizes the role of the Soviet sailor as an ambassador of good will, and Moscow may retain expectations that the Navy will enhance the popular image of the USSR.

Although these objectives are mutually reinforcing, they are not interdependent. Nor do the Soviets appear to believe that each can be achieved to the fullest measure in every situation. Rather, they appear willing to advance more quickly in some areas than others or even to recognize that an individual goal may be temporarily inappropriate. The lack of emphasis on popular good will in Aden in recent years, for example, reflects Moscow's realistic reassessment of its chances for success. In most cases, the Soviets seem to recognize that the value of naval presence lies in its long-term potential, not just in its immediate short-term benefits.

Elements of Naval Presence. The term "naval presence" covers more ground than Soviet use of local naval facilities. It incorporates efforts by the Soviets to use their Navy to cement relations with the host state, as well as pressure to expand Soviet naval privileges. It also includes the operational and symbolic value of having highly visible military forces far from the shores of the USSR.

Naval presence has generally involved at least occasional port visits. These have been either official friendly calls involving government ceremonies or public relations events, or unpublicized operational calls for crew rest or replenishment. If a closer relationship has evolved, it normally has included several of the following characteristics:

- Frequent, overlapping port calls so that Soviet ships are continuously present.
- Freedom for Soviet ships from normal entry requirements or priority for Soviet ships.
- Reserved access to berths or permission to station logistics ships in port.
- Workspace, housing, and recreational facilities ashore for Soviet personnel who direct the movement of Soviet ships in port and coordinate maintenance periods.
- Storage ashore for parts or fuel.
- Use of naval-related facilities such as airfields, communications stations, drydocks, or other repair facilities.
- Periodic or continuous deployment of naval reconnaissance aircraft to a local airfield.
- Soviet control of access to Soviet-used facilities.

Offers of naval equipment and training of personnel or technicians nearly always have accompanied the establishment of a naval presence. Soviet naval auxiliaries frequently have been deployed to help Third World nations maintain or operate their Soviet-built naval vessels, and Soviet combatants have conducted joint exercises with those of host navies. In addition, the Soviets occasionally have offered to improve or construct naval or air facilities for the host state—probably hoping to have access to the upgraded facilities.

In some cases, Soviet naval ties with an individual state may remain at the minimal level of infrequent port calls for a number of years if neither side feels compelled to develop the relationship further. Moscow may view its deployments to the region coupled with such occasional calls as sufficient to provide an option for the future. Soviet calls to Benin, Togo, or Nigeria combined with the small West African patrol might fall into this category.

Although Soviet naval presence in most cases has resulted from the accumulation of privileges and reliance on Soviet naval assistance, in others it has been a sudden outgrowth of operational military support to a Third World country. The Soviets established a naval presence in Guinean waters, for example, apparently at the request of President Sekou Toure following a Portuguese-sponsored raid in 1970.

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In some cases, the Soviet presence has not been naval but maritime. Moscow has negotiated fishing agreements or offered to develop fishing ports for nations that have not granted the Soviet Navy any concessions. These maritime relationships are potentially valuable in the overall relationship with a Third World state and are sometimes viewed by the host government or the West as beneficial to the Soviet Navy. Such contacts, however, have little operational relevance for the Navy and are difficult to use to create or reinforce naval ties. The fisheries drydock that the Soviets have placed in Mozambique, for example, is neither available to the Navy nor large enough to service the naval ships that normally serve in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, as several of the case studies illustrate, resentment over Soviet fishing practices can undercut naval initiatives, and wariness about ultimate Soviet intentions can interfere even with efforts to conclude fisheries agreements. Similarly, Soviet failure to deliver on promises of port development, as in the case of Cape Verde, can create animosity between Moscow and the potential aid recipient.

Soviet Naval Operations in Distant Areas and Requirements for Access to Local Facilities

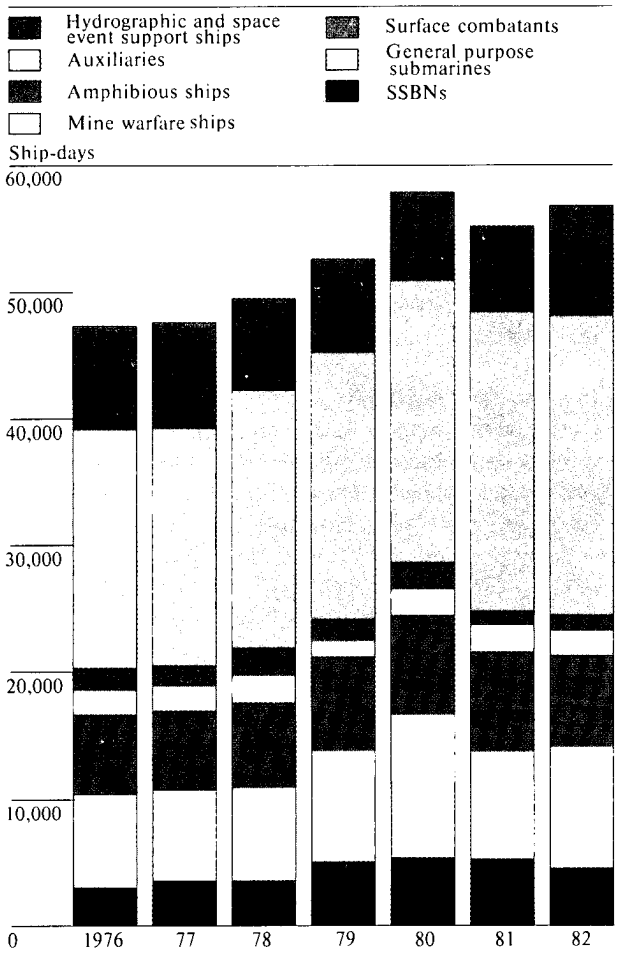
The way in which the Soviet Navy functions in distant areas minimizes the requirement for access to facilities ashore. The Soviet Navy relies primarily on afloat logistic support for warships operating overseas, using naval auxiliaries—tankers, cargo ships, tenders, and repair ships—or merchant ships under naval contract. The Soviets deploy proportionately far more auxiliaries outside home waters than do Western navies and frequently have a ratio of 2:1 between auxiliaries and warships (see figure 1). They rarely purchase fuel from foreign countries, even in the Middle East, preferring to conserve hard currency by transporting fuel from distant Soviet ports. Their maintenance of warships overseas is minimal compared with that of other navies and is performed by the Soviets' own repair ships.

Nonetheless, the Navy's operational flexibility can benefit from the simplicity of performing logistic support in friendly ports, from having a convenient stopover for crew rest or rotation and mail call, and from having a local source of fresh water and perishable provisions. Where they have free and regular access, they often station a tender or repair ship for limited maintenance, an oiler, or other types of service craft. By performing pretransit and posttransit upkeep or middeployment maintenance at such facilities, the Soviets can extend the deployment period of individual units. Pacific Fleet submarines serviced at Ethiopia's Dahlak Island, for example, can remain on station longer before returning to their home fleet. 25X1

Where they have no access to port facilities, the Soviets often use sheltered anchorages in international waters as logistic centers. They may install a mooring buoy, station auxiliaries there, and bring in other naval ships for replenishment and upkeep. The Soviets have established a number of such anchorages—in the Indian Ocean, for example, at Socotra Island, and in the Mediterranean, in the Gulfs of Sollum and Hamamet. (Figure 2 shows the anchorages and port and air facilities currently used by the Soviet Navy.) On occasion, Soviet ships use anchorages in preference to local facilities. For example, despite their extensive access in South Yemen, the Soviets sometimes refuel or repair ships prior to entering Aden, possibly because they are sensitive about having such operations observed. 25X1 25X1

In part, the Soviet Navy can function with the combination of afloat support and limited shore-based support because its activity level is lower than that of Western navies. In general, Soviet ships are under way only about one-third of the time they are deployed, thus conserving fuel and limiting wear and tear. The limited access to overseas ports enjoyed by the Soviets may contribute to the minimal routine activity level of their ships but is not the decisive factor. For example, shortly after their expulsion from Berbera in 1977, the Soviets sharply increased their naval presence in the Indian Ocean and undertook the sealift to Ethiopia. Similarly, although they have never fully replaced the facilities lost in Egypt, the Soviets have reinforced the Mediterranean Squadron several times since 1976 and have sustained a higher-than-normal tempo of operations for the duration of a regional crisis. 25X1 25X1

Figure 1
Soviet Naval Deployments Outside Home Waters, 1976–82



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On balance, then, access to local naval facilities has been an important convenience but—in most places—not a necessity that drives Soviet policy. Moscow's efforts to secure or preserve access do not extend to altering the fundamental thrust of Soviet foreign policy or to preventing the Soviets from taking actions that diverge from the interests of the host nation. 25X1

Other aspects of naval presence create different requirements. Naval aircraft need landing rights and some technical support to conduct overseas deployments. The Soviets seem to restrict themselves to a minimum of local facilities, however, and to station only reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare aircraft abroad. Their deployments to Syria and Libya in the last two years demonstrate their ability to operate with only temporary logistic support. Moreover, the aircraft and their ground support can be rapidly withdrawn if necessary. 25X1

Themes Common to Soviet Naval Relations With Third World States

The common themes that emerge from our analysis will not startle readers familiar with naval matters. Rather they confirm some of the Intelligence Community's intuitive judgments about the factors that condition the success or failure of Soviet efforts to build and use naval presence and how Third World nations may view the Soviet Navy. 25X1

Congruent Interests

The most important single determinant of the nature, extent, and effect of Soviet naval presence is the overall political orientation of the Third World country. When the ground has been prepared by internal and regional developments that make the state ideologically compatible with the Soviets and that create or reinforce a perception of need for Soviet military, technical, and economic assistance, the Navy can be extensively and successfully used as a foreign policy tool. Ideological purity is not a necessary ingredient; the anticolonial experience of most Third World countries and Soviet political support for the struggle against Western domination have provided a sufficient basis for association with the USSR. 25X1 25X1

The Soviets established extensive and durable naval relationships with Guinea and South Yemen. Both were logical associates for the USSR in their respective regions because of their anti-Western revolutions, their left-leaning governments, and because their insecurity or ambitions gave them a strong interest in 25X1

Soviet assistance. Similar calculations have been evident in Soviet naval ties with Libya, Syria, and Ethiopia—cases in which Soviet naval initiatives have capitalized on both anti-Western sentiments and regional tensions. In Libya, for example, a longstanding arms supply role that included naval equipment has widened to a wary acceptance of the presence of Soviet warships and aircraft largely because of Qadhafi's ambitions and his fears of Western reaction.

Initially, the Soviets may even find opportunities for access dictated by the political orientation of nonaligned states. These governments may grant the Soviets some naval access to balance their Western ties and reinforce their nonaligned image. Tunisia, for example, views the extent of access that it permits the USSR as a counterweight to the wide range of ties between Tunis and the West. At various times, Singapore, Cape Verde, and Mauritius have made the same evaluation. Obviously, access based on such calculations by nonaligned states is less secure than that granted by states with greater affinity for the USSR. Nonetheless, it permits the Soviets to maintain a limited naval presence that may expand if circumstances permit.

A natural corollary of the political or ideological affinity that normally exists between Moscow and a host state is that naval presence is most effective in encouraging policies favored by the Soviets when the interests of the smaller state are similarly inclined. Guinea and South Yemen have cooperated with the Soviets and have provided facilities to support Soviet undertakings because of their own ideological orientation, regional alliances, or political interests. South Yemen, for example, had already begun to provide assistance to Ethiopia before the USSR initiated its sealift to Asmara. We have found no examples in which the Soviets successfully exploited their naval presence to pressure countries to adopt policies not to their liking. Nor does a naval relationship with Moscow appear decisive in preventing a nation from taking an anti-Soviet stand as Singapore did on the issue of Afghanistan.

Where Soviet leaders have developed a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics in a region—as they seem to have in the Indian Ocean island states, for example—naval policy can contribute to the success of the overall policy. Where such an understanding is lacking, however, or where Moscow has been inept and blundering—as in its early efforts to bring Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Yemen together—naval incentives cannot overcome the basic weaknesses of Soviet policy. 25X1

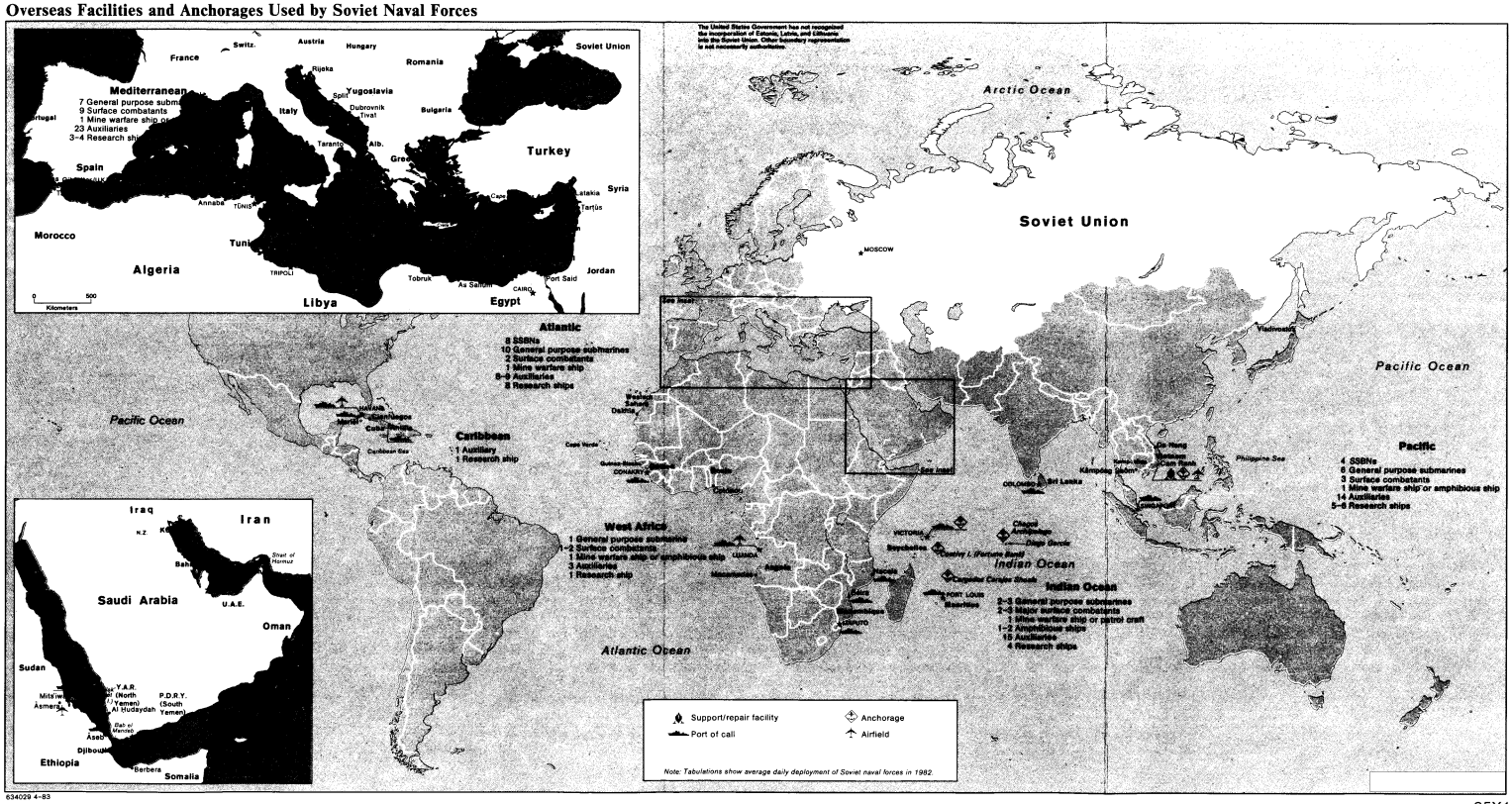
Soviet Calculation of Benefits

The Soviets appear to take the long view with respect to the use of naval facilities, viewing such access as only a small aspect of their foreign policy. They do not press so hard for facilities that they endanger broader political objectives. Their willingness to depend heavily upon floating logistic support is, in strictly military terms, a weakness; politically, it probably is an advantage. 25X1 25X1

In some circumstances—for instance in the Indian Ocean island states where their need for logistic support is limited and their opportunities are uncertain—their policies show a willingness to forgo or limit their own use of facilities in the interests of denying or limiting US access and of increasing their political influence in the region. Their broad support for the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace concept favored by many regional states reflects this policy, as have a variety of initiatives by the late Premier Brezhnev and other Soviet officials for talks that would limit Great Power forces and facilities in the Indian Ocean region. The Soviets quietly complied with a major change in Seychelles policy designed to restrict calls by ships of all non–Indian Ocean navies. In fact, once Victoria had decided to alter its policy, Moscow may have played a behind-the-scenes role in formulating the terms of the new regulations, which effectively prohibit visits by US Navy ships. Although the new rules also limit Soviet port calls, Moscow probably would not be sorry to see other regional states, such as Mauritius, take a similar approach 25X1 25X1

The Soviets are constantly probing for access to port and air facilities throughout the Third World, and they have developed a wide range of enticements to tempt target governments. Under the right circumstances—where they believe that a client is deeply in 25X1

Overseas Facilities and Anchorages Used by Soviet Naval Forces



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debt to the USSR, both financially and politically—Soviet importuning may approach a level that could be described as "pressure." The Soviets have "pressed" Guinea with limited success. In general, however, they stop well short of the "demands" they are so often reported to have made. Moreover, when asked to leave or to limit their naval presence—as in Egypt, Somalia, Guinea, or Singapore—the Soviets do so promptly and with relatively little fuss.

Limitations of Options

Soviet naval presence can influence the flexibility of both the host state and the USSR. Extensive use of its facilities by a Great Power implies a lack of independence that can limit the choices available to the host government. The clearest example is South Yemen, whose support for Soviet military deliveries to Ethiopia—an undertaking in which the Soviet Navy and its access to South Yemeni facilities played an important role—probably was the final blow to Aden's developing rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Although we do not know of instances of similar restraint on Soviet options, it is possible to envision a situation in which a strong Soviet interest in maintaining or expanding access could involve Moscow in limited compromises with the host state.

Limitation of the policies of either partner is reversible, however, as was demonstrated by the Somali invasion of Ethiopia in 1977, the subsequent Soviet decision to support Ethiopia over Somalia, and the resulting expulsion of the Soviets from Somali facilities. Extensive military assistance or an expensive investment in naval facilities will not force Moscow to accept policies of the host state that run counter to Soviet interests nor compel the local government to abide by Soviet dictates.

In contrast, the Navy can provide considerable flexibility to the Soviets in dealing with several states in the same region. Access to facilities in one state does not rule out overtures for additional access in a competing state. For example, the Soviets have managed to secure some access to port facilities in North Yemen while maintaining their substantial naval presence in South Yemen.

Naval Assistance

The Soviets seek to secure self-perpetuating forms of access. They offer naval equipment to bind the client state to the USSR by a continuing need for spare parts and repair services. A continuing Soviet naval presence is frequently required to operate and maintain the equipment, and much of the training of Third World personnel is conducted in the Soviet Union. 25X1

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Where countries have accepted Soviet naval equipment or assistance with building and improving port and air facilities, the Soviets often have been able to capitalize—at least for some period of time—on the access provided. Some of the host states have navies made up almost entirely of Soviet-built combatants, such as South Yemen, Syria, and Ethiopia. The Soviets also provide naval craft for paramilitary duties such as fisheries patrol to states like Cape Verde and the Seychelles. Extensive access to facilities in Guinea and South Yemen almost certainly grew in part out of Soviet largesse, and some officers of the client navies must feel not only dependence but also loyalty. Joint exercises such as those conducted with Syria or South Yemen in recent years also may reinforce professional ties between the two navies. 25X1

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Despite these benefits of Soviet naval presence, many host countries come to resent their visitors over time. Soviet ties to Guinea, for example, have suffered from the "what have you done for me lately?" syndrome. Gratitude for past assistance is quickly dispersed in a sea of complaints about quality, promptness, and unmet requirements. 25X1

Regime Support

The Soviet Navy is well suited to capitalize on the insecurity that often typifies Third World regimes. In Guinea, the Soviet Navy actually provided security services, patrolling nearby waters against raiders from outside the country and, on at least one occasion, capturing a group of dissidents and returning them to Guinean forces. Similarly, Soviet combatants have been sent to the Seychelles on several occasions, reportedly in response to requests from President 25X1

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Rene, who feared externally supported coups. Regime insecurity undoubtedly also plays a large part in cementing the close relationship between the USSR and South Yemen, whose Marxist-oriented leadership is weakened by endemic factional bickering and perceives threats from neighboring moderate states supported by the United States. Even the Tunisians apparently hoped that naval concessions granted to Moscow might lessen the threat they perceive from Libya.

Instability or fear provides the potential for new or expanded access in other states as well. In mid-1981, for example, heightened tensions between Syria and Lebanon led Damascus to permit Soviet aircraft to operate briefly from Syrian airfields—the first time that Soviet naval aircraft had deployed to land bases in the region since 1972. In cases like Madagascar or Mozambique, Western observers frequently point to the lack of regime stability as a possible avenue by which the Soviets may eventually secure naval privileges.

Soviet naval presence is unlikely to play a decisive role in the survival of a regime or in its protection from outside threats. In the Seychelles, for example, the presence of Tanzanian troops probably has been more important than that of Soviet warships. For other countries, such as Syria, the Soviet ships dispatched during a crisis represented less of a commitment than the regime would have liked. Nonetheless, where local forces are small and poorly equipped, even a small force belonging to a major power may seem awesome and the regime may perceive it as having made a real contribution. In the case of Guinea, increased access to important facilities was a direct result of Soviet support to the regime. The gratitude of the leadership may not result in wider Soviet access—as it has not in the Seychelles—but may increase Moscow's political capital with the leadership and be useful for future negotiation.[2]

Inhibitions of the Nonaligned

Ultimately, the extreme sensitivity of Third World countries concerning their nonaligned status appears to limit the potential for extensive foreign naval involvement, not only by the Soviets but by any major outside power. These countries do not want to be labeled "bases" or "clients" of either Great Power. (The level at which such concerns arise varies, of course, depending in large part on the overall political orientation of the Third World state.) 25X1

In many cases, the host countries eventually view Soviet naval presence—either actual or potential—as inconsistent with their independence or nonalignment. 25X1
Guinea, Tunisia, and Singapore acted to limit Soviet access to their facilities. One of the factors prompting Rene's decision in 1979 to limit calls to Victoria by all foreign naval ships was the adverse publicity that Soviet involvement in the Seychelles received in the West—publicity that could undercut the tourist trade, which is a major source of revenue. 25X1

Similarly, when Cape Verde officials were considering Soviet offers that included establishing a limited Soviet naval presence, they registered concern over the effect of such a presence on the country's image. 25X1
This concern played a significant role in Cape Verde's eventual decision to accept assistance, instead, from France and Portugal. Even South Yemen, where there is no evidence of any effort to cut back Soviet naval activities, has taken pains to declare repeatedly that it is not a Soviet "base" and has turned aside Soviet requests for expanded access to facilities. 25X1

Mauritius under the Ramgoolam government displayed little embarrassment over occasional Soviet port visits and services to the ships that called, probably because the President was confident that the most important Western nations viewed his government as essentially pro-Western. He may also have seen Soviet visits as a way to reinforce his nonaligned status by balancing the far more extensive use of Mauritian facilities by the navies of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. The argument that Mauritian facilities were available to the 25X1
navies of any friendly state may also have been useful against the government's domestic political opponents. 25X1

[2] A Soviet port visit in the fall of 1981—reportedly at Rene's request—may have been another example of the use of the Soviet Navy for regime support. 25X1

Escalation of specific regional tensions may encourage a nation to reevaluate the balance between its need for a show of Soviet support and its desire to preserve its image of independence. Such thinking probably prompted Syria's cooperation with the USSR in a naval exercise in the summer of 1981, Libya's decision to expand its naval ties with Moscow, and the expanded presence of Soviet ships in and near Tartus this past summer.

Domestic political fears may at times outweigh concerns about a nation's nonaligned status. The Seychelles' President Rene, for example, may alter his policies on naval visits to secure a firmer Soviet commitment to protect his regime. Even then, however, most Third World leaders probably will clothe a minimum of concessions in the verbiage of nonalignment.

Naval Interaction With Local Populations

Soviet naval presence tends to be low key by Western standards:

- Facilities are generally kept relatively small and austere; many services are provided by Soviet auxiliary ships or floating drydocks rather than by local concerns and shore facilities.
- Contact between naval personnel and local populations is limited.
- Shore leave is restricted; small groups of sailors go ashore accompanied by petty officers to sightsee and make a few small purchases. Naval advisers and technicians stationed in the host country are segregated from the local community to the extent possible and frequently play down their military status.

This policy has both benefits and costs. On the one hand, by keeping fixed facilities to a minimum, we believe that the USSR tries to avoid embarrassing the host country's political leadership with a large, visible foreign military establishment. (Further, the floating support facilities can be easily removed if circumstances warrant.) On the other hand, the Soviet naval presence is of only limited value in creating good relations with the local population. Soviet exclusivity is often resented by the local population, which has little reason to value the benefits of the USSR's naval presence and many reasons to dislike the lifestyle of Soviet personnel stationed ashore. 25X1

For the most part, the Soviet Navy does not capitalize effectively on the public relations aspects of port visits; the Soviets probably are too security conscious to do so. In spite of frequent Soviet references to the sailor as an ambassador of good will, the Soviets probably are more interested in influencing political elites than the population of the countries they visit. As a result, Soviet ships are seldom open to the public, and when they are, access to most parts of the ships is prohibited. 25X1

Soviet sailors have little money to spend and, while their empty pockets and close supervision may protect them from some of the worst errors of Western navy men, local shopkeepers value their visits accordingly. The contrast between the regimented Soviets and the free-spending and freewheeling Westerners is noted wherever both visit; in relatively free societies such as Singapore, Mauritius, and the Seychelles, it seems generally to redound to the credit of the West. Even in an austere and authoritarian society such as Guinea, US diplomatic officials have reported that US ship visits were a welcome change from those of the Soviets. By restricting contacts between Soviet naval personnel and local populations, however, the Soviets do avoid situations that might offend the citizens of poor countries with different cultural and ethical standards. 25X1

Fears of the Host Government

Most Third World countries are concerned about the security threat posed by a Soviet presence. In many Third World countries, local officials are wary of the Soviet ships and personnel, convinced that many of the latter are KGB operatives. Soviets are generally watched carefully and attempts are made to control their activities. Incidents such as Singapore's expulsion of a Soviet shipyard official in early 1982 on espionage charges serve to reinforce such fears. 25X1 25X1

Economic Incentives

The economic incentives associated with Soviet naval presence are of mixed value to both Moscow and the host state. Soviet military assistance—both grants or concessional sales of naval equipment and assistance with modernization or construction of port and air facilities—can provide a direct and significant economic benefit to Third World countries. In most cases, there is no real alternative to Soviet assistance; the countries receive naval vessels, weapons, training, and facilities they could not otherwise afford. The role of arms supplier, even if not immediately associated with naval privileges—as it was not in Libya and has not been in Madagascar—is an option for the future. Nevertheless—as in Guinea and Somalia—the economic benefits, and even continued dependence for spare parts and repair assistance, do not seem to be sufficient to guarantee the Soviets continued access over the long term.

Soviet port visits, whether continuous or intermittent, do not appear to generate enough income to make them a major factor in the local economy. In countries such as Guinea and South Yemen, where many Soviet ships call and some stay for long periods of time, the Soviets apparently do not pay full commercial fees for use of pier space and other facilities—a factor that tends to create hostility rather than good feeling. In these two countries, most repairs to Soviet ships are accomplished by Soviet technicians working out of naval auxiliaries, so little economic benefit—or technical spillover—results. In other countries, the Soviets insist that all work inside their ships be done by their own workmen—with somewhat the same result. A facility like Ethiopia's Dahlak Island—which is currently the major support center for the Indian Ocean Squadron—is operated by the Soviets themselves and provides almost no input to Ethiopia's economy. Moreover, Moscow's consistent refusal to help nations like India or Algeria develop an indigenous repair capability for these Soviet-built units—which would be of economic benefit—is a source of friction.

Although the provision of repair and overhaul services may generate more economically significant benefits, these do not seem sufficient to decisively influence policies of interest to the Soviets. Tunisian officials maintain that their decision to allow the overhaul of Soviet naval ships in the Menzel Bourguiba shipyard at Bizerte was based wholly on the economic benefits and that the Soviet business remains "vital" to the continued existence of the naval shipyard. Tunisia, however, decided in 1979 not to allow the repair of any more Soviet submarines. Singapore, too, welcomed Soviet naval use of its underutilized repair facilities but has now temporarily refused further access to its dockyards for Soviet naval ships. In both instances, these actions were taken for larger political purposes, and there is no evidence that the economic losses involved were a key issue in the decisions. 25X1

Outlook

If the USSR continues to expand its naval deployments to distant areas, it may change its attitude regarding the acquisition and use of foreign facilities. On the whole, however, we expect that the Soviets will continue to be circumspect in their search for foreign facilities and unwilling to pay a high political cost to obtain or to keep them. 25X1 25X1

We should be able to monitor changes in Soviet naval presence—deployments of ships and aircraft, the use of foreign shipyards for repair, and many of the activities of Soviet naval personnel—with a high degree of confidence. Information concerning the terms and conditions of the Soviet presence, intentions, and government-to-government relations is more difficult to collect and analyze, however. 25X1

We believe it is unlikely that the Soviets will establish large-scale support facilities in any Third World state in the near future. They will continue to develop those already in existence, but not as "bases" as the US Navy understands the term. They will continue their naval calls and aircraft deployments to Libya so long as Qadhafi permits. They are unlikely, however, to concentrate much of their Mediterranean Squadron logistics in Libya because of Qadhafi's wariness and their own uncertainty concerning his intentions. Moscow will probably cooperate with the new government in Mauritius to exclude Western navies from Port Louis and to intensify its campaign against the US 25X1

base on Diego Garcia. The Soviets will take any concessions they can trade for their support of President Rene in the Seychelles. They might divert some of the repair work of the Indian Ocean Squadron to Diego Suarez (Madagascar) in the unlikely event that they can gain access there and may use Sri Lanka to compensate for the restricted access to Singapore's shipyards. The Soviets' effort to maintain a naval presence in both North and South Yemen may be set back if tensions between the two increase. Moscow may increase its efforts to return naval reconnaissance aircraft to Conakry and probably will continue to show the flag intermittently at other West African ports. Throughout the Third World, however, we believe that efforts by the Soviets to use their naval presence will continue to be undercut by Moscow's own predispositions against formal bases and by the sensitivities of potential hosts.

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